

LAYING DOWN THE LORE

Few gaming franchises are more high profile and revered than Blizzard's *Warcraft*. Few films are more dreaded than adaptations of video games. So how did a *Warcraft* movie come to exist, and buck the trend to become a box office success? Story consultant James Waugh says it's all about attention to detail. Words: Alesha Kolbe

Warcraft is, of course, based on Blizzard's ridiculously successful series of video games – the first of which was released way back in 1994. With the series spiralling in so many directions, from games to shorts to novels, it becomes understandably difficult to collate the series' rich lore and storylines.

Fortunately, the lore and story team behind the new film were as attentive to detail as possible, making allowances and alterations only where absolutely necessary.

"We have a group that I love to call our professional nerds," says James Waugh, story consultant on the film project. "They're our lore team, our continuity cops. People who are there to keep us on track and document everything we've ever said in publication and any game or any movie. They are not necessarily continuity cops in the sense that they get to say, 'no, you can't do that'. It's more along the lines of, 'this is what we said before. This is what we believe the character thinks'. Their role is to give us the clarity of what we've said before."

When you think about video



game universe lore and where it's kept, chances are you'll envision an underground bunker full of labelled storage boxes. However, the reality is a little different.


"The lore team are just as much archivists as they are anything else," laughs Waugh. "They have all the transcripts from every Blizzard game we've ever put out there; little videos and everything. So, it's all there. It's all accessible. That stuff ends up being more valuable when it comes to reference time."

According to Waugh, the biggest challenge in making *Warcraft* was ensuring a world that many know ridiculously well was accessible to newcomers. Which means, inevitably, that some elements of the game have been excluded from the movie.

"It's not say that we don't change canon. I'm sure you might've noticed there have been changes from time to time; we just try to do it as elegantly

as possible and as painlessly as possible. Because, at the end of the day, we want to serve the story and make the experience the best it can be without damaging the universe."

Warcraft is a rare example of a successful video game adaptation; the film has grossed over US\$400 million in global box office and is the first in a planned franchise. So does Waugh believe that video game movies will continue to get better?

"You have a whole generation of people at the film studios who grew up playing games, and look at games as just as important a media type as their own," he offers. "I think that respect for the content is going to help make video game movies more credible. Just working with Legendary and Atlas on this, they realised this isn't just 'hey, let's go do *Mortal Kombat*' – we wanted to tell a story full of feeling and depth, and nobody ever said this is just a video game movie. They said, 'okay, you guys have built a really rich world, let's see if we can do it.' I think we're probably one of the first really solid video game movies at the cinema, and I'm proud of that." 

• *Warcraft* is out on Sept 22

GOOD VIDEO GAME ADAPTATIONS

Yes, they do exist!



SILENT HILL

French director Christophe Gans captured the nightmarish quality of Konami's survival horror game with freaky visuals, loads of atmosphere, and superb production design.

RESIDENT EVIL

Paul Thomas Anderson cast wife Milla Jovovich as a sexy zombie slayer and consequently turned Capcom's multi-format survival shooter into an unstoppable franchise.

POKEMON

The pop culture phenomenon for under-tens has progressed from Gameboy and an animated movie trilogy to a smartphone game that has taken over the world, and will now be adapted into a live-action film.



TOMB RAIDER

Say what you like about the 2001 film, but you have to admit that Angelina Jolie was inspired casting and raised this adaptation up a notch. Alicia Vikander is now set to do the same as a new screen incarnation of Lara Croft.

